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LETTER DATED 15 JULY 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ETHIOPIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit herewith a statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, issued on 15 July 1999, entitled "The Organization of African Unity (OAU) Summit in Algiers says no to territorial acquisition by force" (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Duri MOHAMMED
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

Statement entitled "The Organization of African Unity (OAU) Summit in Algiers says no to territorial acquisition by force" issued on 15 July 1999 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia

The thirty-fifth session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), convened in Algiers from 12 to 14 July 1999, has unanimously endorsed the Modalities for the Implementation of the OAU Framework Agreement on the Settlement of the Dispute Between Ethiopia and Eritrea. In doing so, OAU has once again affirmed that it stands for principles and the rule of law.

The Modalities for the Implementation of the OAU Framework Agreement brings no new ideas on top of those already contained in the Framework Agreement which was presented to the two parties in November 1998 and which was accepted by Ethiopia immediately.

The pillar on which the Modalities for the Implementation of the OAU Framework Agreement rests - as does the Framework itself - is the call for the return to the status quo ante that had prevailed until 6 May 1998. Ethiopia has always insisted that this is an indispensable condition for peace and, that short of this, peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea would be an illusion. Aggression should and must be reversed - this is what Ethiopia has always said. OAU has responded in the only way it could if it was to be true to its Charter. Ethiopia has stated basically that what was decided in Algiers is consistent with principles of international law and with principles that Ethiopia has insisted should be respected. This was also what was said to African leaders by the Ethiopian Prime Minister, and Head of the Ethiopian delegation, at the Algiers Summit.

What Eritrea did in Algiers, as the Prime Minister emphasized to his colleagues, was to remove the substance of the proposal by trying to amend it and to then say that it accepted it.

What Eritrea had in fact told the Algiers Summit was that it had a different cut-off date for return to the status quo ante - not 6 May 1998 as is indicated in black and white in the Modalities but, as usual, a date prior to that, specifically July 1997. The Eritrean President was insistent on this, telling the Summit, with no grounds for the claim, that facts to corroborate the Eritrean position had been submitted to the High-level Delegation. Other amendments requested by Eritrea included a demand for compensation for an alleged 56 villages that had been uprooted and for Eritrean urban deportees. It was with all these amendments' having been made that Eritrea expressed its professed acceptance of the Modalities for the Implementation of the OAU Framework Agreement. What is surprising was that the Eritrean amendments were presented to the Summit after the Modalities had been endorsed by the Summit by acclamation and after the discussion moved to consideration of other matters.

Under these circumstances, it would require a leap of faith to believe that Eritrea has accepted the Modalities. What Eritrea said was essentially yes, but, and what follows the but makes the yes not only formal but meaningless.

Will the international community allow Eritrea, once again, to continue prevaricating and thus to continue being an obstacle to peace? The OAU Algiers Summit has made its position clear. It has rejected the Eritrean amendments. The same resolve is required from the international community in order to overcome the challenges that are certain to be posed by the Eritrean lack of sincerity which was so abundantly clear in Algiers. Eritrea has not accepted the Modalities for the Implementation of the OAU Framework Agreement. It is unlikely to do so unless the international community tells it in clear terms that it will not tolerate further prevarication from Eritrea. As the Ethiopian Prime Minister told the Algiers Summit, Eritrea needs to be made to accept the Modalities without if's and but's. That is what the Algiers Summit said should be done and that is what the international community should likewise do. The resolution of the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict awaits a meaningful role on the part of the international community.